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ABSTRACT

There is a set of French verbs which admits both indicative and subjunctive sentential complements. The indicative complement is correlated with a positive assertion about the truth of the complement; the subjunctive implies a neutral attitude or a non-assertion. When various sentential complement constructions are considered both in the indicative and the subjunctive moods, it can be shown in comparative examples that the assertions of these complements cannot be accounted for in terms of surface interpretation rules that do not affect the syntactic form of the complex. Instead, these complements form a class of assertions which must be marked in the underlying structure of the sentences that they affect. This must be so because the choice of complement is not dependent on the matrix verb but on semantic factors (e.g., assertion/non-assertion) of the complement clause itself, which are independent of the matrix. A particular interpretation is often implicit in a given sentential complement, and hence, in such cases, will determine the mood of that complement. Thus, the inclusion of assertion/non-assertion in underlying structure is well motivated and the underlying semantic structure affects the applicability of certain transformations. (Author/MHP)

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Assertion and mood in French

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Traditionally there have been essentially two different ways of viewing the selection of subjunctive or indicative verb forms in sentential complements. The difference between these two approaches is most clearly seen in the analysis of the use of mood in embedded sentences functioning as noun clauses:

(1) Je sais que vous travaillez beaucoup.
'I know that you work a lot.'

(2) Je suis content que vous travailliez beaucoup.
'I am glad that you work a lot.'

Following the most common analysis, one can account for the use of the subjunctive verb form in sentence (2) by some sort of classificatory mechanism for matrix verbs or phrases, i.e., <u>être content</u> belongs to a syntactic and/or semantic class of matrices which require subjunctive verb forms in sentential complements. In this view, then, the subjunctive forms themselves have no real semantic function; they appear purely on the basis of a co-occurrence relationship which is syntactically determined.

Largely ignored by structural and transformational linguists alike has been another traditional view that the use of subjunctive or indicative forms corresponds directly to certain basic semantic concepts such as truth value, presupposition, assertion. In this hypothesis the choice of mood in French is directly correlated with what the sentence as a whole expresses about the truth of the proposition included in the sentence. That is, we

postulate that the speaker wishes to convey certain information about the truth of a proposition and that he chooses his syntactic constructions accordingly. Suppose, for example, that the speaker wishes to assert that he believes a certain proposition to be a true statement. He may do so in a number of ways depending on how he wishes to qualify the assertion.

(3) Marie étudiera demain.
'Mary will study tomorrow.'

(4) Je crois que Marie étudiera demain.
'I believe that Mary will study tomorrow.'

(5) Je suis sûr que Marie étudiera demain.
'I am sure that Mary will study tomorrow.'

(6) Il me semble que Marie étudiera demain.
'It seems to me that Mary will study tomorrow.'

In (3) the speaker merely asserts the proposition to be a true statement. In sentences (4) through (6), the same proposition is asserted, but with some qualification.

The difference between the two positions should be made clear. The first analysis claims that the subjunctive or indicative forms do not function meaningfully because the choice of mood is determined automatically by the phrase type found in the matrix. This analysis is syntactically based. Even though the matrices are classified in terms of their meaning, the result is considered to be only syntactic -- the mood of the complement verb being merely a morphological reflex of the class of the matrix phrase. The second analysis is semantically based in that the mood of the complement verb can be freely chosen and thus carries meaning. The hypothesis is that there are several basic

attitudes that a speaker can adopt toward a propostition. These attitudes govern the choice of mood and the choice of matrix.

In this paper, I shall present an analysis of the use of mood in French which is based on the semantic hypothesis. I shall limit the data and the discussion to that class of verbs which admit both indicative and subjunctive complements. Thus, the mental act verbs like croire, supposer, etc. when negative or interrogative can be followed by an embedded sentence whose verb is in either the indicative or the subjunctive mood.

(7a) Je ne crois pas que Sylvie ira à la plage avec nous.

(7b) Je ne crois pas que Sylvie aille à la plage avec nous.
'I don't believe that Sylvia will go to the beach with us.'

(8a) Crois-tu que Charles a dit une bêtise?

(8b) Crois-tu que Charles ait dit une bêtise?
'Do you believe that Charles said something stupid?'

Two solutions to this distribution are possible: either (1) we are dealing with verbs which represent two homophonous entries which take different complements or (2) we must mark semantically in the underlying structure the complement which a matrix verb will take. It will be shown that the semantic property of assertion determines the choice of complement. Further, independant syntactic evidence will be evoked to show that the complements of this class of matrix verbs are indeed different in underlying structure.

In any semantic study of sentential complements, the notion

of presupposition is important. In this paper, I accept the definition advanced by the Kiparskys (1970) and by Keenan (1971). First, the truth of the complement is presupposed by the entire sentence.

(9) Je regrette que Jean soit parti.
'I am sorry that John has left.'

The speaker presupposes that the embedded clause expresses a true proposition and makes some comment about the proposition. Further, the truth value of a presupposed proposition will remain constant under the normal processes of negation and interrogation.

(10) Je ne regrette pas que Jean soit parti.
'I am not sorry that John has left.'

(11) Regrettez-vous que Jean soit parti?
'Are you sorry that John has left?'

In sentences (10) and (11), although the matrix verb has undergone negative and interrogative transformations, it is still assumed to be a fact that John has left.

In addition to the notion of presupposition there is another semantic distinction: emotivity vs. non-emotivity. Emotive complements are those which describe some subjective or emotional reaction on the part of the speaker toward the proposition (<u>être important</u>, <u>essentiel</u>, <u>regretter</u>, etc.). Non-emotive complements are those which describe cognitive or other mental acts with regard to a proposition (<u>être clair</u>, <u>évident</u>, <u>oublier</u>, <u>supposer</u>, etc.). In French emotive propositions usually require the subjunctive mood (see sentences 2, 9, 10, and 11 above). Mental act verbs usually require the indicative mood. See sentences

(3) through (6) and (12).

(12) Pierre s'est rendu compte qu'il était trop tard pour présenter ses excuses.
'Peter realized that it was too late to present his apologies.'

Another of the Kiparskys' points is that matrices can be divided into two classes: factive, which require presupposed complements, and non-factive, which do not. They observed that only complements which are presupposed to be true can be introduced by 'the fact that'. Both of these classes can be found in French.

(13) Le fait que la valeur du dollar baisse est lamentable.
'The fact that the value of the dollar is falling is regrettable.'

(14) *Je sais le fait que l'industrie japonaise a infiltré le marché américain.
*'I know the fact that Japanese industry has infiltrated the American market.'

When we compare sentences (9), (10), and (11) with sentence (12), we see that presupposed propositions can be either in the indicative or the subjunctive mood. The notion of presupposition, then, is not a sufficient condition for the choice of mood in complements. We must look elsewhere.

In this analysis, I accept and apply Hooper's (1973) notions of assertion and non-assertion. An assertion is the proposition expressed in a declarative sentence. More specifically, the speaker or the subject of the sentence has an affirmative opinion regarding the truth value of the proposition. The speaker may express his opinion in a number of ways, depending on whether or

not he wishes to qualify the assertion. If there is no qualification, he states the proposition directly.

(15) Il fait beau aujourd'hui.
'The weather is nice today.'

He may, of course, qualify in various degrees his belief in the truth value of the proposition with the use of the appropriate matrix.

(16) Il me semble qu'il fait beau aujourd'hui.
'It seems to me that the weather is nice today.'

(17) Je pense qu'il fait beau aujourd'hui.
'I think that the weather is nice today.'

(18) Il est certain qu'il fait beau aujourd'hui.
'It is certain that the weather is nice today.'

Note that presupposition that a proposition is true and assertion that it is true are not equivalent. For example, in sentence (19) the proposition that French is easy to learn is being asserted.

(19) Il est vrai que le français est facile à apprendre.
'It is true that French is easy to learn.'

However, the truth of this proposition is not presupposed. Thus, the negation of the matrix does affect the truth value of the embedded clause.

(20) Il n'est pas vrai que le français soit facile à apprendre.
'It is not true that French is easy to learn.'

In (20), the speaker does not think and certainly does not presuppose that French is easy to learn.

Using the notions of presupposition and assertion to classify complements, we find the following possibilities:

(21) Asserted (not presupposed): Je sais que Marie ne viendra pas ce soir.
'I know that Mary won't come tonight.'

(22) Presupposed (not asserted): Il est bizarre que Jean veuille quitter son poste.
'It is strange that John wants to quit his job.'

(23) Neither asserted nor presupposed: Je ne suis pas sûr qu'Adam veuille la pomme.
'I am not sure that Adam wants the apple.'

On the basis of the three preceding sentences, it becomes readily apparent that the indicative mood of the complement correlated directly with assertion (sentence 21) and that the subjunctive mood correlates with non-assertion (sentences 22 and 23). This distinction will be accepted to account for the variation in mood in the complements of matrix verbs like croire, penser, etc. When the complement is asserted, its verb will appear in the indicative.

(24) Je ne pense pas que Jeanne a fini le livre.
'I don't think that Jane has finished the book.'

(25) Croyez-vous que Carter est le bon président pour résoudre les problèmes nationaux?
'Do you believe that Carter is the right president to solve the national problems?

However, if the complement is not an assertion, its verb will be in the subjunctive.

(26) Je ne suppose pas que notre équipe ait gagné le match.
'I don't suppose that our team has won the match.'

(27) Croyez-vous que Carter est le bon président pour résoudre les problèmes nationaux?

The task is now to show that these complements are not dependent on the matrix and that the two are different one from the other

in underlying structure.

Verbs of the croire, sembler class are verbs which optionally undergo NEG-raising. Given the three sentences below, the question to be answered is the following: What is the relationship of (28b) and (28c) to (28a)? Do both (28b) and (28c) result from NEG-raising and therefore both related syntactically to (28a)?

(28a) Marc croit que Tristan n'est pas amoureux d'Iseut.
'Marc believes that Tristan is not in love with Isolde.'

(28b) Marc ne croit pas que Tristan est amoureux d'Iseut.

(28c) Marc ne croit pas que Tristan soit amoureux d'Iseut.
'Marc does not believe that Tristan is in love with Isolde.'

If both (28b) and (28c) are results of NEG-raising, it would mean that they are both related to (28a), and that the difference in the choice of mood does not indicate a difference in underlying structure, i.e., the complements are identical in underlying structure.

NEG-raising is useful in determining the relationship among sentences such as the preceding. In order to see how NEG-raising works, let us examine what Prince (1976) calls negative polarity items. These are expressions which are grammatical only when they are constituents of a negated clause in underlying structure. Consider the following sentences:

(29a) Guy n'a pas dormi de la nuit.
Fifi n'a pas levé le petit doigt pour m'aider.
Jean ne parle pas un mot d'anglais.

'Guy has not slept all night.'
'Fifi did not lift a finger to help me.'
' John does not speak a word of English.'

(29b) *Guy a dormi de la nuit.
*Fifi a levé le petit doigt pour m'aider.
*Jean parle un mot d'anglais.

(*'Guy selpt all night.')
*'Fifi lifted a finger to help me.'
*'John speaks a word of English.'

In complex sentences, we find the same distribution.

(30a) Mon frère croit que tu ne comprends pas un mot de français.
'My brother believes that you do not understand a word of French.'

(30b) Mon frère ne croit pas que tu comprennes un mot de français.
'My brother does not believe that you **understand** a word of French.'

(30c) *Mon frère ne croit pas que tu comprends un mot de français.

(31a) Max imagine que sa femme n'a pas dormi de la nuit.
'Max imagines that his wife has not slept all night.'

(31b) Max n'imagine pas que sa femme ait dormi de la nuit.
'Max does not imagine that his wife has slept all night.'

(31c) *Max n'imagine pas que sa femme a dormi de la nuit.

(32a) Je pense qu'il n'en a du tout pas parlé.
'I think that he has not spoken about it at all.'

(32b) Je ne pense pas qu'il en ait du tout parlé.
'I do not think that he has spoken about it at all.'

(32c) *Je ne pense pas qu'il en a du tout parlé.

In complex sentences such as (30b), (31b), and (32b), expressions such as un mot de français, de la nuit, and du tout are grammatical even though the negation appears in the matrix clause. We must therefore conclude that the negation originated in the subordinate clause and was moved to the matrix verb via NEG-raising.

The ungrammaticalness of sentences (30c), (31c), and (32c) shows that when the complements are in the indicative and the negation appears in the matrix verb in surface structure, this is not a result of NEG-raising. Instead, the negative transformation has operated on the matrix itself. We conclude that sentences (30a) and (30b), (31a) and (31b), and (32a) and (32b) share a common underlying structure, while the structure which underlies (30c), (31c), and (32c) does not meet the structural index of NEG-raising and is therefore different.

The formation of tag questions and corrective responses in French further show two different underlying clause structures. Affirmative sentences can take either oui or non as a tag, whereas negative sentences admit only non.

(33a) Il neige, oui/non?
'It's snowing, isn't it?'

(33b) Il ne neige pas, *oui/non?
'It isn't snowing, is it?'

Now consider the following complex sentences:

(34a) Je suppose que Georges ne viendra pas, *oui/non?
'I suppose that George will not come, will he?'

(34b) Je ne suppose pas que Georges vienne, *oui/non?

(34c) Je ne suppose pas que Georges viendra, oui/non?
'I don't suppose that George will come, will he?'

We conclude from the grammaticalness of the tags that sentences (34a) and (34b) share a common negative underlying structure and are thus related one to the other. That both tags in sentence (34c) are acceptable leads us to believe that the complement was never negative in underlying structure and that the negation be-

longs instead to the matrix.

In answer to questions, French has oui, si, and non. The distribution is as follows:

(35a) Voulez-vous du café? --Oui/Non.
'Do you want any coffee? --Yes/No.'

(35b) Ne voulez-vous pas de café? --Si.
'Don't you want any coffee? --Yes, I do.'

An affirmative is expressed by oui unless the question is in the negative, in which case it is expressed by si. Actually, si may be used to contradict or correct any kind of preceding negative proposition. The correction process is identical in complex sentences.

(36a) Je suppose que Nathalie n'ira pas en France.
'I suppose that Nathalie will not go to France.'

-- *Mais oui! 'Of course, she will!'
-- Mais si! 'Of course, she will!'
-- Mais non! 'Of course, she won't!'

(36b) Je ne suppose pas que Nathalie aille en France.
'I don't suppose that Nathalie will go to France.'

-- *Mais oui!
-- Mais si!
-- Mais non!

(36c) Je ne suppose pas que Nathalie ira en France.

-- Mais oui!
-- *Mais si!
-- Mais non!

According to Prince, the choice of corrective answer depends on the polarity of that to which it is a response. This is shown in the preceding sentences. Mais oui is an inappropriate response to sentence (36a) because the complement is negative. Likewise, Mais oui is inappropriate in answer to sentence (36b) because the

complement was originally negative. In sentence (36c), Mais oui is appropriate but Mais si is not because the complement here was never negative.

Sentence pronominalization further shows the semantic difference between embeded clauses.

(37a) Adam ne croit pas qu'Eve ait mangé la pomme, et je le crois aussi.

(37b) *Adam ne croit pas qu'Eve a mangé la pomme, et je le crois aussi.
'Adam does not believe that Eve ate the apple, and so do I.'

Sentence (37a) indicates that Adam and I are of the same opinion and agree that Eve probably did not eat the apple. Sentence (37b) indicates two opposite beliefs: (a) that Adam does not believe that Eve ate the apple and (b) that I do believe that she did. The sentence underlying (37a) is Adam croit qu'Eve n'a pas mangé la pomme. The pronoun le pronominalizes the string Eve n'a pas mangé la pomme before NEG-raising has applied. In sentence (37b), given the fact that NEG-raising does not apply, the pronoun le can pronominalize only a non-negative string, Eve a mangé la pomme. What makes sentence (37b) anomalous, then, is the incongruity of conjuncts. The first conjunct expresses disbelief that Eve ate the apple, the second expresses the opposite. The addition of aussi further underscores the incongruity. Sentences of the type (37a) and (37b) further motivate the assumption that NEG-raising has not applied to the structure whose embedded clause is in the indicative and further shows that the embedded clauses are indeed different in underlying structure.

In this paper, we have briefly considered the notions of presupposition and assertion. It has been shown that presupposition is not adequate in explaining the choice of mood in sentential complements. Rather, it has been shown that assertion does have the explanatory power. With matrix verbs which admit both indicative and subjunctive complements, complements which are asserted require the indicative mood and complements which are not asserted require the subjunctive. In other words, it is the assertion/non-assertion distinction in underlying structure which accounts for the semantic and syntactic behavior of sentential complements. Syntactic evidence, especially the NEG-raising transformation, has been marshalled to further show that there exist two different underlying complements. Additional syntactic evidence is available, but because of time limitations, is not within the scope of this paper. We conclude, then, that inclusion of assertion/non-assertion in underlying structure is well motivated and that the underlying semantic structure affects the applicability of certain transformations.

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